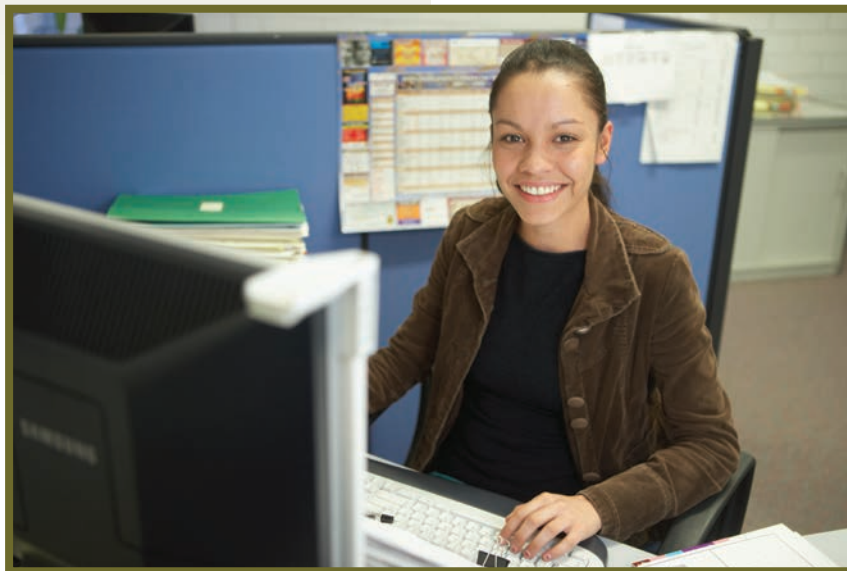




Office of Equal
Employment Opportunity
Government of Western Australia

Western Australian Public Sector

Recruitment and Retention of Indigenous Australians



Showing the way!

O E E O

Diversity in the public sector

Indigenous Australians are people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who identify and are accepted as such by the community in which they live.

% of Workforce	2002	2007	5-year change
Indigenous Australians	2.2%	2.3%	+0.1%

Over the last five years, the number of Indigenous employees has remained relatively static, increasing only marginally from 2.2% to 2.3%. The sector is below the Government's objective of 2.8% for 2007 and more needs to be done to increase the participation rate of Indigenous Australians.

Steps to follow to employ Indigenous Australians

Step 1: Recruitment

Advertise to include Indigenous Australians in the applicant pool

- Attract Indigenous applicants by advertising in Indigenous newspapers, radio, Indigenous faculties at Universities, local services and at community events such as NAIDOC week
- Have an Indigenous Human Resources Officer to assist Indigenous applicants
- Examine the Indigenous Employment Program at <http://www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Programmes/IndigenousProgs>
- Identify positions, at all levels, that could incorporate Indigenous skills and ensure that selection criteria offer Indigenous applicants the opportunity to highlight these skills
- Assess whether qualifications are essential for the position or whether past experience and current competencies will suffice
- Use plain English in the job description and advertisement. Be brief and to the point
- Use the following text in the job advertisement:

We are seeking to increase the diversity of our workforce to better meet the differing needs of our customers and to improve equal opportunity outcomes for our employees. Indigenous Australians are encouraged to apply.
- Build partnerships with Indigenous organisations, then seek their assistance when conducting recruitment exercises
- Use Indigenous Cadetships or the Department of The Premier and Cabinet's Business Traineeship Program, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (ATSI) stream, or Entry Level Employment Program, ATSI stream

Step 2: Selection methodologies

Ensure the approach taken in selection, and the environment established for interviews, will put Indigenous applicants at ease. This might be enhanced by:

- Using interview panelists that have participated in cross-cultural awareness training
- Including an Indigenous person on the interview panel (preferably as the Panel Chairperson)

- Being aware of and accommodating cultural differences in communication styles and body language
- Using an informal questioning style and break questions down (for example, don't ask three questions at the one time)
- Use 'open-ended' questions and ask for concrete examples to demonstrate skills, such as 'tell us about a time when you...'
- Try and develop a rapport with the interviewee prior to the formal interview
- Avoid having physical barriers, such as a desk, between the panel and the interviewee

Step 3: Retention

Induction

- Incorporate cross-cultural training as part of induction training for Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff
- Make personal introductions when meeting new staff and stakeholders
- Where possible, involve existing Indigenous employees in the induction process
- Clearly identify the new employee's duties and responsibilities
- Specify the reporting structures in the agency
- Discuss the employee's entitlements including:
 - hours of work
 - lunch breaks
 - flexi-days
 - dress requirements
 - use of vehicles
 - leave entitlements
- Be aware (and make sure managers and co-workers of Indigenous staff are aware) that flexible work arrangements may occasionally be needed to meet cultural obligations

The transition to a new work environment can be a difficult process. Be flexible and supportive

Organisational Culture

Cultural obligations to community and kin can have a significant impact on work for Indigenous employees. Discuss these issues with Indigenous employees and ensure that they have access to information and assistance in exploring flexible work options such as:

- Working of a percentage of a full time workload (e.g. .80 of a full-time fraction)
- Having rostered days off
- Job sharing and/or shadowing arrangements within a team
- Using family friendly work practices

Discuss issues related to work performance openly, frankly and early. Be open to learning about cultural differences and adapt your style as much as you expect others to adapt to yours - workplaces need to be adaptive to changing circumstances.

Be sure to value, both in comments and in practical ways, the contribution that Indigenous staff make to the business through community and family networks and be careful not to place Indigenous staff in a position where they are required to act 'against' community and kin.

Step 4: Development

Mentoring

- Mentoring is a supportive relationship between an Indigenous employee and another employee
- A mentor provides support, encouragement, constructive advice, assists with problem solving and creates a reciprocal learning environment
- A mentor listens, assists with decision-making, identifies opportunities and gets to know the whole person

Career Advancement

- Provide access to training to improve promotional prospects
- Select Indigenous trainers with cross-cultural expertise
- Consider Indigenous employees for acting opportunities and job rotations
- Nominate positions for an Indigenous person on the basis of equity (to improve employment outcomes for Indigenous people or services to Indigenous clients) as per sections 50(d) or 51 of the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*
- Provide a career path. Ask questions, both on commencement and during performance development meetings, such as 'where would you like to go in our agency?'
- Develop career plans for Indigenous employees. Make sure they understand the structure of the agency and present possible career opportunities
- Encourage Indigenous staff to apply for senior positions
- Support skills development external to their current position
- Offer Indigenous staff recruited via s50(d) or s51 of the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* mainstream programs, positions and acting opportunities (even at equivalent Levels)

Tip: Set up a network of Indigenous people within your agency (or from a group of agencies) that meets regularly

Government can show the way in employing and retaining Indigenous Australians and the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity can help you do it

For more details on the recruitment and retention of Indigenous Australians, visit the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity website at

www.oeeo.wa.gov.au/publications/guides/indigenous.htm

Office of Equal Employment Opportunity

Level 21, Governor Stirling Tower, 197 St Georges Terrace Perth WA 6000

Telephone 08 9219 6414 Fax 08 9219 6040

Email deope@opssc.wa.gov.au Web www.oeeo.wa.gov.au